

Executive Summary

Overview

The purpose of this report is to study the success of the post-secondary graduates of 1995 in making a transition to the labour market five to six years after graduation. These graduates were first surveyed 18 months after they graduated. The results show there were marked differences in employment outcomes for graduates from different institution types, and from programs of different length. The current study investigated whether, given more time to become established, graduates from all sectors eventually realized the employment and earnings benefits from their education.

These graduates faced many challenges. In 1996, unemployment levels were high in the Province (19.4%) as compared to the Canadian average (9.4%), influenced by the groundfish moratorium imposed in 1992, and a slower than normal national economy. This high unemployment level would cause graduates to consider moving out of the province. Rising tuition rates and other increased costs led to changes in the provincial student loan program which allowed students to borrow higher amounts, and therefore accumulate higher student debt.

For graduates of 1995, the post-secondary education environment from which they had come had recently experienced a number of changes. Many graduates had received training under The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS), the income support and skills development program for displaced fishery workers. The training component of this program resulted in a significant increase in the number of private colleges and increased enrolment in both public and private post-secondary institutions.

Key Findings

Eighty-six percent (86%) of 1995 graduates were employed at the time of the 2000-2001 survey, an increase from 68% employed in June 1996. The majority (71%) were employed full-time in jobs directly or indirectly related to their education.

Full-time employment was higher for graduates who left the province (88%) than those remaining in the province (73%). However, with the exception of private college one-year program graduates, those who chose to remain in the province had more success in finding a full-time job related to their education.

Graduates of programs of longer duration had better employment rates than other programs. Five to six years after graduation, 93% of graduates of two- and three-year public college programs indicated they were employed compared to 83% of graduates of public college one-year

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programs and 81% and 78%, respectively, of graduates of private college one-year and two-year programs. Likewise Memorial's undergraduate (88%) and master's (92%) program cohorts reported high employment in 2000-2001.

The majority of employed graduates (79%) reported having permanent jobs, while 12% reported working at a temporary job and 9% in seasonal jobs.

Less than half of unemployed respondents were actively seeking work due largely to family responsibilities (27%) and the pursuit of further education (23%).

1995 graduates across all sectors reported higher wages in 2000-2001 than in 1996. Graduates from Memorial University master's program reported the highest wages (75% earning greater than \$800 weekly) while graduates from private college one-year and two-year (37% and 31% earning less than \$320, respectively) programs reported the lowest wages.

Males generally reported higher wages than females. Respondents living outside the province also earned higher wages than those in the province.

Most respondents reported they were satisfied overall with their work (95%) and their wages (80%).

Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents reported they were willing to move to improve their job prospects. Those who were not willing to move most commonly cited family responsibilities as the main reason.

One in four 1995 graduates had undertaken further educational pursuits with most pursuing a diploma or certificate (62%).

Varying significantly by sector, the sources of post-secondary funding most frequently used by 1995 graduates included government student loans (44%), personal earnings (36%), and government programs, primarily HRDC and TAGS (33%).

Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents who had used government student loans still had an outstanding balance five to six years after graduation, averaging \$12,867. Just over one-third (36%) reported having difficulty repaying their government student loans.